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ABSTRACT

This paper uses socialization theory to re-examine a unique, 10-year longitudinal study of headteachers so as to describe the stages of headship transition. It outlines prior models of leadership succession in both business and schools and produces a stage theory of headship that can be used not only as a research tool, but also as a way to assist the development of heads and prospective heads. The article outlines the stage theories of socialization and examines previous research on headship-preparation programs. The longitudinal study re-examined here consisted initially of questionnaires that were administered to 188 headteachers. Follow up questionnaires were then distributed to a select number of these principals over a 10-year period. The responses enabled the creation of a model depicting the stages of transition in the headship: Stage 0--preparation prior to headship; Stage 1--entry and encounter (first 2 months); Stage 2--taking hold (months 3-12); Stage 3--reshaping (year 2); Stage 4--refinement (years 3-4); Stage 5--consolidation (years 5-7); and Stage 6--plateau (years 8 and onward). The model should help headteachers understand the likely phases they will experience during their tenure. Although each school is unique, patterns of development are still evident and can be used for preparation and support. (Contains 22 references.) (RJM)

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Stages of Headship: A Longitudinal Study of the Principalship

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Introduction

This paper re-examines a unique ten year longitudinal study of headteachers (funded by the National Foundation for Educational Research, Weindling and Earley 1987, Earley et al. 1990 and 1994/5) in the light of socialisation theory in order to study the stages of headship transition. Previous models of leadership succession in both business and schools are outlined. Finally, the NFER findings are combined with the earlier work to produce a stage theory of headship which can be used as a research tool and to assist the development of heads and prospective heads.

Stages Theories of Socialisation

A useful approach to understanding leadership and headship development is derived from Merton's (1963) socialisation theory. The stress here is on the two-way interaction between the new leader and the school situation (with each trying to change and influence the other). In this view of socialisation, which is prevalent in the North American research, there are two main overlapping phases: professional and organisational socialisation:

- Professional socialisation

This form of socialisation involves learning what it is to be a headteacher. A person begins to learn this prior to taking up the role, from their own experience of schooling and teaching, as well as through formal courses.

- Organisational socialisation

This is defined by Schein (1968) as the process by which one learns the knowledge, values, and behaviours required to perform a specific role within a particular organisation. Therefore, this phase can only begin once the person is appointed to their post as headteacher, when they have to learn about the culture and ways of working in a particular school.

Formal and informal processes operate for each type of socialisation which have two main components: 'technical' - learning the necessary skills and knowledge, and the 'moral' - developing values, norms and attitudes (Greenfield 1985).

Although most of this paper focuses on organisational socialisation after the leader has been appointed, in order to explore how socialisation affects the person it is important to study the preparation period prior to headship which is the main stage of

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professional socialisation, though it continues into headship. Because as Duke (1987) points out;
School leaders do not emerge from training programs fully prepared and completely effective. Their development is a more involved and incremental process, beginning as early as their own schooling and extending through their first years on the job as leaders. Becoming a school leader is an ongoing process of socialisation.

A large body of work exists, drawn largely from the non-educational field, where previous writers have suggested stage theories to explain the transition phases experienced by leaders. Although various labels are used by different authors, they commonly identify three periods of organisational socialisation. Hart (1993) provides the most detailed synthesis and critical analysis of the field and the following is adapted from her book.

Stage 1. Encounter, Anticipation, or Confrontation
The initial arrival stage, requires considerable learning on the part of a new head or principal as they encounter the people and the organisation. Cognitive approaches focus on rational interpretations and the understandings that people construct. Louis (1980) called this process *sense making*, stressing the importance of how the person attempts to make sense of the situation.

- **Stage 2. Adjustment, Accommodation, Clarity**

The second stage involves the task of attempting to fit in. The new leader must reach accommodation with the work role, the people with whom he or she interacts, and the school culture. The newcomer looks for role clarity within the new setting. The new leader may have to cope with resistance to change from established members of the group.

- **Stage 3. Stabilisation**

During the third stage, stable patterns begin to emerge from socialisation. This stage is clearly visible only in longitudinal data extending over a number of years. Nicholson and West (1988) using a cyclic model, treat the stages of stabilisation and preparation (for the next change) together, because they found that stabilisation did not occur for some managers as they had moved on to their next post.

Previous Research

A few studies have looked at the period as a deputy or assistant principal as preparation for headship. Ribbins (1997), for example, used interviews with 34 heads to obtain their retrospective views of deputy headship. Some enjoyed the experience and viewed it as an appropriate preparation for headship. But relatively few remembered their days as a deputy with overwhelming enthusiasm or the heads with whom they worked with unqualified warmth. Although most felt that their heads had not positively prepared them for headship, they believed that they had learned from the negative experiences, in that they vowed that they would never act like that when they became a head.

Gender issues and headship were explored in two important studies. Evetts (1994) used data from interviews and questionnaires with 20 male and female secondary

headteachers. Hall (1996) also adopted a life history approach with her detailed study of six women headteachers. These researchers showed that the career paths of women heads and the way they approached management, differed from that of men, but the authors do not develop a stage theory of headship.

Leithwood, et al. (1992) reported their findings from four studies involving both aspiring and practising principals in Canada. They charted the various socialisation experiences which occur prior to appointment or after appointment as a principal, and which are seen as useful or not useful. The researchers found these ranged from carefully planned, formal training programmes, through less formal but still planned experiences (e.g. working with a mentor) to quite informal, unplanned on the job experiences.

Leithwood et. al. concluded that most people thought they had experienced a moderately helpful pattern of socialisation, a few had a negative pattern, and about a fifth considered they had quite a helpful pattern. Differences were strongly related to the local education districts. Women and men experienced very similar socialisation patterns, although men appear to receive earlier encouragement to consider the principal role, whereas women perceive more frequent leadership opportunities available to them. Formal pre aration programmes appeared to vary widely in their perceived value.

Parkay and Hall (1992) conducted a US project modelled on the NFER research. They surveyed 113 new high school principals and carried out case studies of 12 throughout their first year in post. A return visit was made after the principals had been in post for three years.

The authors derived a five stage developmental model to describe the career patterns of new principals:

Stage 1	Survival
Stage 2	Control
Stage 3	Stability
Stage 4	Educational Leadership
Stage 5	Professional Actualisation.

Four basic assumptions underlie the model. Parkay and Hall believe that:

- Principals begin at different stages of development. (Not all people started at Stage 1).
- Principals develop through the stages at different rates.
- No single factor determines a principals stage of development. The situational context of the particular school plays a part, so do personal characteristics. Finally, the previous principal has an impact on their successor.
- Principals may operate at more than one stage simultaneously. The stages are the predominant orientation of the principal.

In England Day and Bakioglu (1996) obtained questionnaires from 196 headteachers and interviewed a sample of 34. The data revealed that heads experienced several developmental phases from taking up post to their retirement.

- Phase 1. - Initiation: idealism, uncertainty and adjustment

Two key processes were seen by the heads in the first phase which lasted for about three years: one was learning on the job and the other was realising their new ideas had to be accommodated within the existing framework and structure of the school.

- Phase 2. - Development: consolidation and extension

Heads with four to eight years experience were still enthusiastic and this was seen as the most satisfactory and rewarding phase. They experienced fewer difficulties than in the other phases. They were able to build new management teams, as inherited senior staff left, and were able to delegate more responsibilities.

- Phase 3. - Autonomy

The heads continued their self-confidence, and felt they now had expertise in educational management. But during this phase they had less energy, a nostalgia for the past, and they saw the externally imposed national initiatives as a reason for their lack of enthusiasm. 'Autonomy' had both positive and negative effects. It was positive in that heads saw themselves in control of the school, but negative in that this was now under threat due to external change and pressure to work with governors.

- Phase 4. - Disenchantment

A decline in confidence, enthusiasm and fatigue were the characteristics of the disenchantment phase. Heads started to ease off and their health (physical and mental) deteriorated as they approached retirement. The pressures of the Education Reform Act had major impact on many of the heads.

Ribbins (1998) adapted Day and Bakioglu's phases and combined them with a stage model developed by Gronn (1993, 1999). This suggests four key phases in the lives of leaders: formation, accession, incumbency, divestiture. Ribbins used his interview material from heads to produce a model of typical routes or pathways for school leaders.

- Formation - the early socialisation influences from agencies such as the family, school and other reference groups which shape the personality of a future head.
- Accession - advancement in their chosen career and preparation for headship.
- Incumbency - the total period of headship, from appointment to leaving headship. This is sub-divided into Day and Bakioglu's four phases (initiation, development, autonomy, disenchantment) to which Ribbins adds enchantment as an alternative to disenchantment for some long serving heads.
- Moving on - leaving headship. This could involve divestiture for the disenchanted or reinvention for the enchanted.

A stage model was also derived by Reeves, Moos, and Forrest (1998) from interviews with 29 headteachers (5 in Denmark and 24 from England and Scotland). The analysis showed a fairly consistent developmental pattern which the researchers divided into eight stages, each of which seemed to mark a qualitative change in the school leaders' experience and orientation to practice.

1. Stage 1	The Warm Up	(Pre-entry)
2. Stage 2	Entry	(0 – 6 months)
3. Stage 3	Digging the Foundations	(6 months – 1 year)

During the first three stages the heads are trying to come to terms with the school and the school is trying to get the measure of the new leader.

Stage 4	Taking Action	(9 months – 2 years)
Stage 5	Getting above Floor Level	(18 months – 3 years)
Stage 6	The Crunch	(2 years – 5 years)

For these stages the head is taking action and making changes. These are initially small changes, followed by more substantial ones often aligned to the leader's beliefs and values.

Stage 7	Reaching the Summit	(4 years – 10 years)
Stage 8	Time for a Change	(5 years – 10+ years)

At this point the leader and the school have reached a mutually agreeable way of working. Having empowered others to take a more active leadership role within the school, the head turned increasingly to the outside world. This was often followed by some loss of interest and a desire for pastures new. The authors point out the similarity of their results to those of Weindling and Earley.

A particular interesting study of relevance to the NFER project, was carried out by Gabarro (1987). He conducted research on 17 senior management successions in business and industry in the US and Europe (including three case studies in the UK). Gabarro pointed out that while there has been research on management succession, very little work has examined the activities and problems facing a new manager after they take up their post. His study tries to fill this gap in the succession process. Gabarro calls the process 'taking charge' which he defines in the following way;

By taking charge, I do not mean just orienting oneself to a new assignment. Taking charge, as I use the term, refers to the process by which a manager establishes mastery and influence in a new assignment. By mastery, I mean acquiring a grounded understanding of the organisation, its tasks, people, environment, and problems. By influence, I mean having an impact on the organisation, its structure, practices, and performance. The process begins when a manager starts a new assignment and ends when he or she has mastered it in sufficient depth to be managing the organisation as efficiently as the resources, constraints, and the manager's own ability allow.

Using his data Gabarro found that patterns stood out and formed a series of five chronological stages. The taking-charge process can be characterised as occurring in a series of predictable stages of learning and action. These stages are:

- Taking Hold (the first 6 months)

A period of intense learning as the manager develops a cognitive map, or mental model, of the organisation. This involves a process of orientation to the organisation, and a process of evaluation - an assessment of staff, understanding where the

problems lie, and establishing priorities. There are lots of management actions during this stage as well as learning. There are corrective actions to address the problems which become apparent as the manager develops their cognitive map. 'Turnaround' situations often involved immediate changes to deal with urgent problems.

- Immersion (from approx. 6 to 12 months)

This is a very important period of deeper learning and diagnosis. It involves relatively little organisational change activity. Managers develop a much better understanding of the basic issues and underlying problems. They often question more sharply if they have the right people in place as they will have now gained an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the staff.

- Reshaping (from approx. 12 to 21 months)

The time of major change when the new manager attempts to reconfigure various aspects of the organisation to implement the ideas from the previous period of immersion. The transition between immersion and reshaping often involves the use of task groups and external consultants.

- Consolidation (from approx. 21 to 27 months)

A period in which earlier changes are consolidated. The learning and diagnosis here tend to be evaluative. The manager and key colleagues assess the consequences of the changes made earlier and take corrective actions. They need to deal with any unanticipated problems which arose.

- Refinement (from approx. 27 to 36 months)

A period of fine-tuning with relatively little major additional learning. The managers had by this point 'taken charge' and were no longer a new manger. By now, they had either established their credibility and power base, or they had not. In addition, the relative calm could be disturbed by changes in the external world.

Gabarro found that the organisational changes managers made as they worked through these stages characteristically occurred in three waves: the first wave occurs during the Taking-Hold stage, the second, and typically largest, during the Reshaping stage, and the last and smallest during the Consolidation stage. These stage and wave patterns are found in successful transitions regardless of the kind of succession (insider versus outsider; turnaround versus non-turnaround cases), the industry of the organisation involved, or the manager's prior functional background.

Having reviewed previous work, the following sections provide some of the findings from the NFER research.

The NFER Secondary Heads project

This unique project, which followed a cohort of headteachers for over ten years, began in 1982 with everybody who took up their first post as a head of a secondary school in England and Wales. The first stage of the research obtained questionnaire data from 188 heads. Forty seven new heads were interviewed after about three months in post. Sixteen of these heads were then chosen for detailed case studies covering the first

two years of headship. A total of three visits were made to each of the schools in this part of the project and individual interviews conducted with the heads, each of the senior management team, a cross-section of teachers, the chair of governors and a senior LEA adviser. A total of over 300 interviews were conducted. The second phase in 1988 re-interviewed the 16 heads and again surveyed the cohort of heads after they had been in post for 5-6 years. The third phase in 1993, collected survey data from 100 heads who were still in post some 10-11 years after they began their headships.

A vast amount of data was collected over the ten year period. For this paper I will concentrate on identifying the problems the heads experienced and look at the changes they made.

The First Years

The key point to make is that new heads do not start their headship with a clean slate (as some seem to think). The shadow of 'headteachers past' hangs over them for longer than they expect. The previous head had often retired, having been in post for 15 to 20 years. They had 'shaped the school in their image' and while this might be visible in the form of structure, it was harder to see the school culture. The heads often experienced surprise when they confronted existing routines and were told, 'That's the way we have always done it'. They soon found that their approach differed from that of their predecessor and this affected the period of settling in and the kind of changes they made. Many teachers said the new heads and their predecessor differed considerably they were like 'chalk and cheese'.

The national survey and the case studies showed that the main problems reported by the cohort of new heads were: difficulties caused by the style and practice of the previous head, the school buildings, communication and consultation with staff, creating a better public image of the school, coping with a weak member of the SMT, dealing with incompetent staff, and low staff morale. Space does not permit a discussion of these problems, nor how the heads dealt with them. However, in a later section a comparison will be made between the problems experienced in the first years with those reported after 10 years.

Changes made in the First Years

The heads differed in their approaches to change. Some deliberately set out to make a number of changes early on, others chose to move cautiously, while some were delayed and hindered by a poor SMT.

Almost all the changes made in the first year were organisational changes. Curricular changes began in the second year and continued to be introduced in the third year and beyond. A few of the changes to the pastoral system occurred in the first year , but these were mainly introduced in years two and three.

The organisational changes made soon after the new head's arrival were frequently concerned with communication and consultation. Another group of early changes was concerned with promoting a positive image of the school, something of particular concern to the new heads especially where the community had a low opinion of the school or in areas where the roll was falling.

Today it is hard to remember the pre-National Curriculum and OFSTED inspection period when these heads first took up their posts. The curricular changes had to be initiated by the new heads. Those which affected the timetable could not be implemented until the beginning of the second year in September 1983, but a considerable amount of preparatory work was undertaken in the first year. This usually took the form of a curriculum review, where each department was required to set out its aims, objectives, schemes of work and, in some cases, methods of assessment.

Of the two hundred plus changes introduced in the first three years in the 16 case study schools, it was noticeable that only a handful did not originate from the new heads themselves. Once the decision to adopt a change had been made, day to day responsibility was usually delegated either to a deputy head or a head of department.

The five year period had been a time of considerable change for the new heads and their schools. Relationships with staff formed a dynamic, evolving and shifting pattern which one head expressed in the following way:

Year 1	*Exciting, trust, movement ahead.*
Years 2/3	*Paralysed by industrial action. Distant, threat, suspicion, frustrations.*
Year 4	*New consultative procedures following my term in industry, rebuilding trust and confidence.*
Year 5	*Relations probably better than could be expected.*

We now jump forward in time and look at the schools after the heads had been in post for ten years.

Ten Years On

The external changes produced by the Educational Reform Act and other legislation had only just begun when we conducted the second phase of the research in 1988. The following five years saw the heads attempting to cope with substantial changes imposed from outside.

100 of the original cohort 1982/83 returned a completed questionnaire. Seventy seven were still in their first school, while 23 had moved to a second headship. We were not able to track down the fate of those (104) who did not return a questionnaire, but we believe that most had retired.

To gauge their feelings after 10 years the heads were asked a set of questions about their current level of enthusiasm. Two thirds of the heads said they had the same enthusiasm as when they started as heads. But there were noticeable differences between those who were still at their first school compared with those who had moved to second headships. For example, 40% of the people who were still in their original school said they did not have the same enthusiasm as when they started, compared with only 14% of those in second headships. This may not be an unexpected result, but it is difficult to tell whether those who moved to a second school were more

highly motivated people, or whether the challenge of a new school boosted their enthusiasm. It is most likely to be an interaction of the two.

One of the case study heads who felt he had plateaued said:
Ten years in post is a long time. The prospect of another 10 in the same post is daunting, but it looks inevitable. It seems that the school, staff, governors and myself have come to an understanding, an accommodation. I am less interventionist and it is now the 'young Turk' deputies who are pressing for change and I seem to be holding them back because of my perception of immense pressure on the staff with the implementation of the National Curriculum.

In contrast, a head who had moved to take up a second headship and did not feel he had reached a plateau said:
Notwithstanding all the external pressure, headship remains as exciting now as it was in 1982.

Problems Now and Then

In order to explore how the problems changed over time a set of core questions were used in the first and last surveys. A number of other questions were used either when the heads were new in post or ten year later e.g. those regarding the previous head, or later the introduction of the National Curriculum etc. The following table only shows the heads perceptions in 1984 and 1993 on the core questions where a direct comparison is possible.

Comparison of problems perceived by Secondary Heads in 1984 and 1993 Percentages

	V. serious or serious		Moderate or minor		Not a problem	
	1984	1993	1984	1993	1984	1993
Getting staff to accept new ideas	47	20	47	68	6	12
Creating a good public image	42	21	43	60	15	19
Dealing with a weak member of SMT	38	27	36	39	26	34
Dealing with incompetent staff	37	31	32	63	31	6
Dealing with poor staff morale	36	16	51	58	13	26
Improv. consultation / communication	35	18	46	66	9	16
Managing staff dev. and INSET	30	5	60	60	10	35
Estab. good standards of discipline	27	6	51	65	22	29
Managing time and priorities	21	40	54	50	25	10
Dealing with LMS and finance	19	10	58	57	23	33
Issues concerning non-teaching staff	19	11	57	52	24	35
Working with LEA officers	7	7	42	27	51	66
Working with the governors	6	11	42	50	52	39
Working with LEA inspectors	5	3	32	28	61	69

The table shows that most problems were perceived by the heads to lessen over time. For example: getting staff to accept new ideas; creating a good public image of the school; dealing with poor staff morale; improving communication and consultation; managing staff development and INSET; establishing discipline; dealing with finance;

and issues con[illegible]ing non-teaching staff. However, a few problems seemed to have increased, such as: managing time and priorities; working with the governors. While dealing with incompetent staff appears to have continued over time. Working with LEA officers and advisers remains a very minor problem for most heads.

These findings are likely to be due to the interaction of several complex factors. With time the head and staff get to know each others strengths and weaknesses; the head is able to make a number of key staff appointments; they have gained a deeper understanding of the school and have introduced most of their intended changes. But the world outside has also changed. During the 10 year period a large number of external changes occurred, such as; the role of governors, LMS, GM, NC, league tables, and OFSTED inspection etc. etc.

School Improvement After 10 Years

The 100 heads were asked to outline how they thought the school had improved in the last five years since the previous survey. It is interesting to compare these results with the heads' replies to the same question in 1988 when they had been in post about five years.

Half the heads reported improved exam results in their first five years, while 29% said the results had improved in the last five years. It seems possible that some sort of 'levelling off' may have occurred. However, without more detailed information it is not possible to say exactly what has happened over the total ten year period.

Similarly, in the 1988 study, half the heads mentioned improvements in the curriculum. Not surprisingly, this again emerged as a focal area. In fact, the comments were very similar, usually describing a more relevant curriculum, but after 10 years just over a quarter of the heads mentioned the curriculum.

Approximately the same number of heads - about a quarter - talked about physical improvements in the buildings and facilities in 1988 and 1993. At each point in the study very similar comments were also made about improvements in the main areas of staff, students, parents and the community.

School improvement, in all its forms, is obviously the major quest for all heads. From our longitudinal research it seems that most of the groundwork is put in place during the first five years or so, and then further refinements are made. This involves setting up a number of working parties, curriculum and organisational restructuring, modelling appropriate behaviour, and most crucially, appointing key staff (particularly at senior and middle management).

The research on effective schools shows the importance of school culture. The main task for the head is to create a shared vision and provide the necessary leadership to shape the culture of the school. The link between leadership and culture is most cogently argued by Schein (1992):

Organisational cultures are created by leaders, and one of the most decisive functions of leadership may well be the creation, the management, and if and when it becomes necessary, the destruction of culture. Culture and leadership, when one examines them closely, are two sides of the same coin, and neither can really be understood by

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itself. In fact, there is a possibility underdeveloped in the leadership research that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with culture.

Changing the culture of the school cannot be done easily or quickly, the NFER research shows that the 'class of 82' had continued this difficult task. They seemed intuitively to know that; 'School improvement is steady work, and there is no quick fix'.

Transition to Headship: Stages of Socialisation

A problem with much of the previous research in schools or businesses is the lack a sufficiently long time frame to see all the phases of development. Hence the value of the NFER ten year study and the reason for presenting the re-analysis of the data in this paper.

Gabarro's work shows interesting parallels with the NFER study where the new heads attempt to 'take charge'. But heads are more constrained than business managers in their ability to hire and fire and the school year and timetable delay major curricular changes. Nevertheless, the waves of changes described by Gabarro have great similarity to the way that the heads introduced change. Another common finding was that internally appointed heads/managers appear to make less changes and to move more slowly that external appointments. The notion of turnaround situations in business now has a counterpart with the OFSTED designated 'special measures' or failing schools and the pressure on the head to bring about rapid change. New heads have been appointed in about half of the schools in this situation, as the previous head leaves just before or soon after the inspection. Some decide to go, others are asked to leave by their governors or the LEA - they either jump or are pushed. To what extent they act as a scapegoat is open to debate.

The first three of Day and Bakioglu's phases correspond closely to the three main phases of socialisation outlined at the beginning of this paper. Their final phase of disenchantment produces a new perspective, while Ribbins offers the alternative of enchantment for some long serving heads. The NFER data shows that as Ribbins believes, some heads are enchanted and others disenchanted by their experience of headship.

The NFER results and the work of previous writers have been used to produce the following model which maps out the stages of transition through headship.

Stage 0 - Preparation Prior to Headship
Throughout their career people develop a conception of headship during their professional socialisation which is learned from both formal and informal processes. As the NFER and other studies show, they learn from both good and bad headteacher role models (e.g. Ribbins 1997).

The NFER heads said they learned about headship throughout their career but they particularly stressed the value of the following experiences prior to appointment:

the need for a wide variety of experience, especially as a deputy head; the value of a period as acting head; the importance of delegation by the head; the rotation of deputies' responsibilities; and the need to work with heads who saw deputy headship as a preparation for headship.

Some heads spoke highly of management courses that they had attended as deputies, but most agreed that off the job training and development was a complement to the experiences gained as a deputy working with 'a good practitioner'. The gulf from deputy to head was, nevertheless, seen as enormous and 'no course or reading matter can really prepare you for the job'. It will be interesting to see to what extent the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) improves the preparation for headship.

Stage 1 - Entry and Encounter (First months)
The first few days and weeks are a critical period when the new head's notions of headship meet the reality of a particular school. It is a time of 'surprise' and the importance of sense making is highlighted as organisational socialisation begins and the new head attempts to develop a cognitive map of the complexities of the situation, the people, the problems and the school culture.

Stage 2 - Taking Hold (Approx. 3 to 12 months)
The newcomer strives to 'take hold' in Gabarro's terms, and the new heads begin to challenge the 'taken for granted' nature of the school. The NFER heads introduced a number of organisational changes. They develop a deeper understanding and their diagnosis of key issues during this stage is used to decide priorities.

This is also part of the 'honeymoon period', when staff are more lenient and open to change. In the NFER study we found that all new heads had such as period, though some did not realise it! The length time varied, from about a term to possibly a year. It was often ended suddenly by negative staff reaction to an action of the new head e.g. an internal appointment whom the majority of the staff considered the wrong person for the job.

Stage 3 - Reshaping (Second Year)
After a year in post most heads felt more confident and were beginning to feel that they could take the 'L' plate off their backs! They had experienced a complete annual cycle of school events and they had learned about the strengths and weaknesses of the staff. Conversely, the staff had also learned about the strengths and weakness of the new head, and the expectations of both the new head and the staff had become more realistic. The seeds which had been planted in the previous stage now resulted in the implementation of major changes to reshape the school. This was the period of major change.

Stage 4 - Refinement (Approx. Years 3 to 4)
After two years many of the structural changes were in place. But during this stage further curriculum changes were introduced and a number of refinements are made. The previous innovations were fine tuned. By this time the heads felt they were 'hitting their stride'.

Stage 5 - Consolidation (Approx. Years 5 to 7)
After about five years a period of consolidation seems to occur as the heads have introduced most of their planned changes. However, in the NFER study this was affected by the introduction of legislative and external changes. These, as Gabarro found, require attention as their impact may hit the school during any of the stages.

Stage 6 - Plateau (Approx. Years 8 and onwards)
The NFER Heads suggested that about seven years in one school was sufficient to see through a cohort of pupils and to have initiated most of the changes they wanted. This period corresponds with Day and Bakioglu's phase of disenchantment or Ribbins enchantment. The NFER data shows that about a third of the cohort felt they had reached a plateau after 10 years. But this was far less likely to have occurred if they had moved to a second headship. Motivating heads who stay in one school until the end of their career can be a problem. However, many of the NFER heads said they still enjoyed their work and despite the changes to the role, considered it to be the best job in education.

The model is in the form of an ideal type and some caveats are necessary. Clearly the time periods attached to each stage must be treated as approximations. It is likely that different heads move at different speeds, as Parkay and Hall suggest. Also, the situation in the UK has changed considerably due to ERA and other legislation. Whereas the NFER heads were able to introduce almost all the changes internally, today's headteacher has to manage major multiple initiatives which originate externally, and attempt to integrate themselves and shape the culture of the school.

The studies by Evetts, Hall and others show some differences between male and female heads. Unfortunately, the NFER study of secondary heads had too few woman heads to made a comparison. This means that it is not possible to say how gender differences might affect the stages of headship.

The model is offered as a means of helping headteachers and prospective heads to understand the likely phases they will experience during headship. Although the particular circumstances in each school make it unique there are common patterns, knowledge of which can be used to improve the preparation and support for heads.

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